Aloooooooha, Every one:

Gary and I are so honored to be with you all today to celebrate his life.

Thank you so much from the depth of our hearts for everything you have been doing. Thank you so so much Tom, John, and Peter, and many of his colleagues and friends. You are so kind and caring to stand by and reaching out your hands during this most difficult journey in our life. You not only helped Gary finish his classes and carry on the researches but also kept asking me how you may help. Don’t know how to thank you. We are so grateful for this opportunity to share our memories together.

Gary and I met outside of this building in this same courtyard at TGIF (Thank God Is Friday) beer party in 1996. I was a graduate student in atmosphere physics, studying and working in the neighbor buildings of Marine Science and HIG. At the very first time we met at TGIF, Gary asked and insisted on teaching me to play tennis because I was taking a tennis class that semester. He walked me a little bit further to my place each time after playing tennis together, twice a week for three months. Then he asked to join me and my friends, a couple, to go to Chinatown on a Saturday. We had lunch all together afterwards. Then we played tennis and went to my favorite Bellows beach in the afternoon. Then cooked and ate dinner and then went to a dancing party in the East-west Center in the evening, all together with my friends. That first date is still like yesterday.

 The next "first time" was when I went to Gary’s office in this building. I saw the words written in Chinese on the blackboard: 我爱李智边, I love Li Zhibian, my Chinese name. I was actually quite surprised because he hadn't told me in person yet, and perhaps was afraid of scaring me. I wasn't sure for quite a while because he was ten years younger than me. That wasn’t an old Chinese tradition. A Chinese student 阳恒 Yangheng happened to be in his office at the time. Yangheng pointed at the blackboard said to me that the words had been here for a long time, 在这儿好久了. The next "long time" was that those same words that stayed on that blackboard over 20 years until he moved to a different office a couple of years ago.

Here is how Gary convinced me about our age difference: "Women normally live longer. I want to accompany you more at the end." Ah Gary, I did and still do appreciate your intention and thoughts.

Gary was so sure and told me right after we met, "You don't need me, you like me". He said also "I don't know whether there is God, but it must be God made us for each other".

Yes, we got married in May of 1997, about a year later. We had a very simple wedding in the Nasarene church in Kaimuki, and our wedding reception was in Makiki park.

The pictures showed Gary play volleyball right after the wedding reception. He loved sports, all kind of ball games. He would play volleyball for 5-7 hours without a break.

 Gary came to UH physics as an engineer. He was not sure if he should get a PhD when we met. Well, he passed the qualifying exam and finished the courses, then took an engineer job at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. Only 3 months after we went there, his PhD adviser Steve Olsen asked him to come back. Instead of 3 years, we stayed at Geneva only for about one year, during which he wrote his PhD dissertation, while working a fulltime engineer job. The two of us drove around and traveled all over in Europe while we could. Then we came back and he finished his PhD in 1999. And I came back to work on research in the next-door Marine Sciences building again.

We both love kids but we only got this one, big fuzzy head Little Gary. Big Gary took Little Gary to bed every day ever since.

Then we both took an adventure by joining a high-tech startup company, and moved to Silicon Valley with the company. Gary worked on hardware and I was on the laser transition in air and on software. We earned double the salary and the work was less than in the university.

We rented a pentagon-shaped house on 13.2 acres in the Santa Cruz mountains above Saratoga, CA. We watched the fog and clouds rolling up from the Pacific Ocean all the time. Used water from our own well. I loved to burn wood at the fireplace in the house every day after work in the winter for heating, and sometimes for cooking. We never turned on the electric heater the whole winter.

Sadly, “the great dryer accident”, called by Gary, happened in the mountain house. It got Little Gary’s fuzzy hair melted.

Sure, Gary drove all around in the area. Gary’s love of driving was evident at 9 months, see the picture. He enjoyed driving so much, 10-16 hours each day, day after day. Driving was his meditation too. I liked sitting in the car and enjoying natural views and taking pictures.

Then after one year, instead of 5 years as we planned to be in US mainland, Gary was asked to come back to UH again for the experiment in Antarctica Peter brought us back and then there were other exciting projects.

Here was Gary’s routine for years. He got up every day at 4 am no matter how late he went to bed. He put his alarm in the office and was forced to get up and go to office to turn it off. He rode the stationary bike, lifted weights, did sit-ups, then started working. I got up around 5 am to make him breakfast, often sushi rolls, and cut fruits and veggies for his lunch. He walked down from our home near the top of St. Louis heights in the early mornings and hiked up from UH to home, 700 feet high up, 40 minutes for him in the late afternoons. He didn’t want to walk without that very heavy backpack on his shoulders. He slept so little, 4-5 hours daily average on bed, all year around. He normally watched half hour evening news before dinner and read the newspaper and did a crossword normally less than an hour after dinner then worked again. He put 200% of his energy 16 hours a day roughly, into his work with strict self-discipline.

Gary didn’t have big ambitions but it seemed he always felt a big urgency, driven from deep inside to do more and faster and better. He said years ago “I over achieved my life goals already”. He loved working; it was his way of enjoying life. Working was his harbor away from emotional wind and waves. He had this ability to let go or push down worries and anxieties, and just focus on things to be done, even after he had been diagnosed with this deadly cancer. For him, work was a kind of meditation.

I do know that Gary's most powerful ability was to know immediately who he wanted to be with and to work with at first sight, as his colleagues told the same stories also. He had all of you to work together. That was the most important reason for his accomplishments.

My dearest Duck Daddy, I don’t know how to express my deepest appreciation to you for being in my life for 28 years. You loved me unconditionally and supported me to be myself and to do whatever I liked.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) was and still is my passion. After taking nighttime classes on ECE, I decided to quit my job to be an ECE teacher. You never cared how little money I made. I enjoyed to be with kids and forgot everything else in the world. I become one of them when being with kids. Gary loved to play with children as well.

We bought an over 50 years old house. Had to fix the problems. To tell the architects what we want, I was introduced a book by a very nice elder architect. So, I read that book and many other books bought or borrowed from the libraries. After showed the simple ideas I got, I was told I already did the design. I learned a bit CAD and read thousands of pages of building code to draw a real detailed design for a permit. Later on, we became our own general contractor, something we never could thought of.

Gary trusted and encouraged me to do the house addition. Without any background and experience, it was a real adventure, risked our lifetime savings plus new mortgage for the expenses. I was just like a child playing blocks. I warned Gary “if fail, we could end up losing everything, including the house”. But he didn’t worry or care. He said “no problem. We can start over”. I was afraid of making mistakes. He said, “Professionals make mistakes too. You may not know but still pay for them.” He was very happy with the addition at the end. “It has soul in it”, as he said. No way I could do it without his unconditional support. The house has not been finished completely yet. It has become a life time project.

Gary had such a pure and tender heart. Even after the cancer was diagnosed, he didn’t express his anger. I yelled occasionally and felt not fair but he said “If someone has to have it, why not me.”

I always felt he was my boy, then after he got sick he was my baby. So sorry I could not die for you.

Gary has an uncle who passed away at age of 59 from liver cancer in 2000. I asked uncle Mike during his last Christmas with us: "Is there anything you might do differently if you had a chance?" He said, "Retire earlier." He also loved his job so much. He spent 33 years as a journalist and longtime theatre and dance critic for Star Tribune, the largest newspaper in Minnesota. He also directed plays and freelanced for numerous other publications. Gary and I had some opportunities to watch plays with uncle Mike and Gary’s dad Sim, who also taught theatre for 20 years at Metro State University besides teaching in high school for 30 years. Gary’s dad also died from a white blood cell cancer, leukemia at 68 years old in 2008. Gary’s younger sister passed away at age of 39 in 2012 from a very rare genetic disease, too much iron in her blood. She left behind her husband and two young girls.

Even all these happened, it was so ignorant and stupid stubborn to think that Gary’s health was solid and would have nothing to do with cancer because his body shape and quality was so much like his mother, who is much healthier and stronger. But I was still worried that Gary might have a heart attack or something like that, because he liked to work and play at such a high intensity and super-fast speed. For years, whenever Gary was tired or felt sick, which happened normally only on weekend or holidays, I was nervous and asked him to retire, remembering his uncle’s and dad’s lessons. But I had to learn painfully to allow him to live the life he wanted, just as he allowed me to be myself and do whatever I liked. Maybe your fate was sealed genetically at your birth, the sarcoma cancer gene was tested in his body for sure. Also, the doctor at Sloan-Kettering in New York informed Gary that he had Li-Fraumeni syndrome. This is a rare illness due to a missing gene that normally fights cancer. Maybe that's why you always had an urgency and you were aware of the clock ticking all the time. One thing for sure is that you did your best and reached your highest potential. Just as you said years ago, "I have over achieved my life goals long ago”. He said a couple of days before leaving "I put lifelong dedication to my work. So amazing. Thank you so much for all your support for years. You will be missed.” "I had an abundant and fruitful quality of life." "I have no regrets."

The sarcoma cancer gene was tested in his body for sure. He also had Li-Fraumeni syndrome; a rare illness due to a missing gene that normally fights cancer.

Gary stopped breathing on 07/14/23 at age of 56 after 11 months of "too big of battles" with cardiac angiosarcoma cancer.

It is a very aggressive and extremely rare kind of cancer, 40 people in US per year.